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**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
OFFICE**

GENEVA

December 1920.

Studies and Reports

Series A

No. 14

**The 15th Congress of the General Confederation
of Labour (Confédération Générale du Travail)**

(France)

held at Orleans the 27th September to the 2nd October, 1920.

The General Confederation of Labour held its 15th Congress (the 21st National Trade Union Congress) at Orleans during the six days from the 27th September to the 2nd October 1920.

This "extraordinary" Congress was convened in accordance with a resolution adopted by the National Confederal Committee (Comité Confédéral National) on the 21st May, at the end of the railwaymen's strike, when the decision was taken in favour of a general resumption of work by the Unions which had supported the action of the Federation of Railwaymen (Fédération des Travailleurs de la Voie Ferrée).

Following an earlier strike of railwaymen in the month of February 1920, and as a result of the manner in which the Ministry of Public Works and the Companies had carried out the clauses of the agreement which brought that strike to an end, a minority of the Federation of Railwaymen severely criticised their Federal Council. The latter was replaced, and the new officials of the Federation, completely changing its line of action, decided to initiate a movement for a series of consecutive strikes to commence on the 1st May, and appealed for assistance in this movement to the General Confederation of Labour. They had not, however, concluded any agreement with the latter body before issuing the order to strike.

The General Confederation of Labour thus found itself involved through the decision of a particular Federation in a movement of great importance. After the movement failed, the leaders of the Confederation (The Confederal Office (Bureau Confédéral) and the Executive Committee of the C. G. T.) were exposed, on the one hand, to the reproaches of those who would have preferred to avoid this check to the Confederation, and, on the other hand, to the attacks,

which soon became violent, of the promoters of the May strike, who accused the Confederation of having failed to give sufficient support to the movement.

An extraordinary National Congress was proposed and agreed to. Its purpose was not to discuss the past, but to examine the position of the C. G. T., to define its general programme, and to determine its future action. It had to decide whether the leaders had acted rightly in supporting the Railwaymen's Federation in their strike, and also "whether the world of organised labour is master of its methods of action and the direction of its movements... whether the C. G. T., as the representative of the unity of French workers has no choice but to obey the most inconsiderate orders and no means of escape from the immense responsibilities resulting from them". Further, it had to define "its conception of Federal autonomy, and to say whether each Organisation has the right to take advantage of its individual freedom of action for the purpose of undertaking the most serious measures which must necessarily involve all the forces of the Confederation". Finally as the attacks on the leaders of the Confederation in the press developed into the most serious accusations, the Congress had to decide whether "the C. G. T. should be crippled by the effects of the constant efforts to discredit it by systematic misrepresentation of intentions and results; whether the desire for action, the will to realisation, the confidence in an ideal should be open to suspicion owing to the fact that they were allied to practical considerations, to judicious delays and to preparations which encourage the endeavours and ameliorate the condition of servitude of the workers." (1)

The Agenda of the Congress, which was previously discussed by the National Confederal Committee on the 23rd and 24th August, was as follows:—

- (1) Adoption of the Report of the Credentials Committee.
- (2) Discussion and vote on the reports of the Confederal Committee and the Executive Committee.
- (3) Modifications of the Constitution.
- (4) The future programme of the General Confederation of Labour :
 - (a) Nationalisation on industrial principles.
 - (b) Hours of work.
 - (c) The housing problem.

The discussion at Orleans of the first two questions occupied so much time that the Congress had to refer the consideration of the modifications of the Constitution to the

(1) These phrases are taken from a pamphlet published by the Confederal Office and the Executive Committee after the strike in May and quoted in part in the General Report (see below).

National Confederal Committee at its meeting on the 8th November, and it altogether abandoned the consideration of hours of work and the housing problem. Even the question of nationalisation on industrial principles, although touched upon several times, was not directly or completely debated.

The Credentials Committee reported a total of 2,225 Trade Unions represented at the Congress.

Resolutions.

The Congress in the first place passed unanimously four resolutions proposed by the Executive Committee.

The first conveyed to the workers' organisations of other countries the fraternal greeting of the General Confederation of Labour, and expressed its determination to associate itself closely with these organisations in the struggle against war and in the endeavour for the establishment of a just and lasting peace.

The second protested against the blockade of Russia and the prohibition of the Russian Trade Union delegation led by Mr. Losowsky from entering French territory on the occasion of the Congress.

The third denounced the repressive measures to which the workers' representatives had been subjected in France, demanded the liberation of those who were imprisoned, and declared the determination of the General Confederation of Labour to pursue "in spite of all threats the realisation of its ideal of justice and liberty for all".

The fourth was directed against the refusal of the Government, in spite of its promises, to recognise the right of organisation of Government servants, and welcomed the entry of the latter into the General Confederation of Labour.

The Congress gave a warm welcome to the appeal made to it by a delegate of the disabled in industry (Mutilés du Travail), who was himself blind as a result of a mining accident. "The C. G. T." declared the Secretary-General, Mr. Jouhaux, "has already taken up its position, and it has undertaken a campaign for the improvement of the condition of persons injured or disabled by industrial accidents."

THE GENERAL REPORT

The General Report was printed and distributed by the Confederal Office before the Congress (1) together with the

(1) General Confederation of Labour: General and Financial Reports for the year 1919-1920 presented to the 21st Trade Unions Congress, being the 15th Congress of the C. G. T. Maison des Syndicats, Printing Department. Octavo, 82 pp.

proposed modifications of the Constitution (1). The report differs from those which had been presented to the preceding Congresses and particularly from that which was submitted to the Lyons Congress in September 1919. It is not a complete narrative, but a simple summary of Trade Union action since the last Congress. As particulars of this action had already been given in the monthly numbers of the "Voix du Peuple" (Voice of the People), the official Bulletin of the C. G. T., and a pamphlet issued by the Confederal Office and the Executive Committee of the C. G. T. relating to the Railway Strike of May 1920, which was the occasion of the Extraordinary Congress, had already appeared, a detailed narrative of trade union activity was unnecessary (2).

"If" says the Preamble to the General Report (3) "the action taken by the C. G. T. since the Congress of Lyons be examined in its general character, it will be readily seen that it consists of two parts, national action and international action.

The first has been characterised by the application of the general ideas defined in the Lyons Resolution and expressed by the Constitution of the Economic Labour Council and by the Manifestos and Propaganda relating to nationalisation on industrial principles. Between this action and the railway strikes there is a direct connection.

The second has a two-fold character: it comprises in fact the action of the trade union International, reconstructed in July and August 1919, at Amsterdam, a few weeks after the Lyons Congress, and the action of the delegates of the C. G. T. in the International Labour Organisation created by the Peace Treaty, both at the first Conference at Washington and in the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, of which the General Secretary of the C. G. T. is a Member."

These were, in effect, the essential questions considered during the first four days of the Congress, which were devoted to the discussion of the General Report.

1. *The May Strike and Nationalisation.*

The question of nationalisation was bound up with that of the strike, for the Railwaymen's Federation had placed nationalisation at the head of its demands.

The criticisms expressed in the Congress of the leaders of the Confederation may be summed up as follows:

(1) General Confederation of Labour, 211, rue Lafayette, Paris: Modifications of the Confederal Constitution proposed to the Congress of Orleans, September 1920, by the Commission appointed by the National Federal Committee. Maison des Syndicats. (Nov. 12 pp.).

(2) General Confed. of Labour: Confederal Action and the Railway Strike. Publishing Office of the Confederation of Labour, 33, rue de la Grange-aux-belles, 1920. Octavo. 40 pp.

(3) General Report, page 3.

"The C. G. T. did not properly support the movement of May; it did not dare to go so far as the proclamation of a General Strike; it did not give sufficient preparation to the scheme of nationalisation."

These grievances were repeated several times under different forms, by various speakers of the Minority. The replies of the speakers on the side of the Majority, Messrs. Rey (Allier), Bourderon (Coopers), Bartuel (Miners) were very spirited. Their effect was, substantially, as follows:

"The strike was not in fact properly prepared, but it was the railwaymen who set it going. The trade unions set in motion by the C. G. T. for the purpose of supporting the movement of the railwaymen, did what was required of them, while the railwaymen only partially obeyed the order to strike.

If sufficient preparation had not been given to the nationalisation scheme, why did the railwaymen include it in their demands? And if the idea of nationalisation had not penetrated sufficiently among the masses of workers, was not this the fault of the Minority which had itself condemned all idea of nationalisation? Moreover, it was untrue that the question of nationalisation had not been carefully studied. It had been, at least by the miners."

Mr. Sirolle, a Minority Railwayman of Paris, gave valuable support to the speeches of the Majority speakers by declaring that, as had been indicated, he had not been in favour of the strike movement, but that it was his duty to carry out what the Congress of his Federation had resolved upon. As for the scheme for the nationalisation of the railways, it had long been considered by the Parisian Unions.

The conclusion of this debate was drawn by Mr. Dumoulin, Deputy-Secretary of the C. G. T., in an important speech delivered on the third day of the Congress, in which he said among other things: "We are now relieved of the burden which has weighed on our shoulders since May last. I had noted with pleasure and so had you, that a Federation like that of the railwaymen was not a toy to be played with, but an instrument to be used with all caution.— For this Federation had succeeded in combining three hundred thousand members, it had considerable funds and it also had a building for housing its staff. What pains you, and us also, is to see the present condition of this Federation; what pains you and us is the result of the battle, the thousands of men dismissed and the victims of every kind. What pains us all is the present attitude, the present position of the trade union organisations in our country. Our duty was (not for the sake of quarrelling about aims or personalities) to show you the dangers of applying the method which Mr. Sirolle calls: "The method of enervation." It is not your revolutionary

sentiments which are in question, or your idealist views; it is a method of fighting, which has produced the results which you know; and it is this method which we must condemn for the future, if we are to learn the necessary lessons.

This is what we take the responsibility of saying: We condemn methods of action which can only produce results such as those in which you have compelled us to participate. We had not the right, Mr. Semars, to refuse on the 2nd May the support of the C.G.T. to the Railwaymen's Federation. We had not the right, however correct your views may have been—I am not speaking to the Comrades of the North but to those who reproach us on other grounds than yours—to decline to join in the struggle. It was necessary, in view of the facts with which we found ourselves confronted, to take the plunge courageously, as our Comrade Jouhaux says. We took it courageously, and we take the responsibility of having been beside you in the battle. You must take the responsibility of having committed your organisation to the struggle without preparation, prematurely, without sufficient warrant for doing what you did. These responsibilities we cannot accept."

2. The International Labour Organisation *The Washington Conference and the International* *Labour Office.*

The General Report contains (pages 60-65) an account of the International Labour Organisation and its work from the time of the Washington Conference to the Conference at Genoa. The declaration made by the Executive committee of the Confederation, when it agreed to send Delegates to the General Labour Conference at Washington, is recalled. The text of this important declaration is as follows:—

"As already announced, the Executive committee has decided that the Confederation shall be represented at the International Conference on Labour Legislation, which has been convened in pursuance of the Peace Treaty by President Wilson, and will be opened at Washington on the 29th October. It has appointed as its representatives, Comrades Jouhaux, Dumoulin, Lenoir, Bidegaray and Bouvier.

This decision has been arrived at in accordance with the decisions of the National Confederal Committees and of the recent Confederal Congress, which pronounced on the question by the adoption of the General Reports, and in accordance with the conditions defined by the Central Trade Union Organisations assembled at the Conference at Amsterdam.

The C. G. T. finds that, in accordance with the decisions of the Trade Union International, the workers' representatives of all countries taking part in the meeting at Washington have been appointed by the Central Workers' Organisations

of each country, and, in the case of countries already belonging to the International, by the organisations affiliated to the latter.

It is therefore the Workers' International itself which will have the duty of defending, in the presence of the representatives of the Governments and employers, the interests of the workers.

The C. G. T. finds, moreover, that as a result of the efforts of the Workers' International which had made the participation of the Central Powers an essential condition of its own participation, the Supreme Council has recognised the legitimacy of such participation. The representatives of Germany and Austria will therefore be invited to deliberate on the general questions in which the labour organisation of all countries is interested. A first effort will thus be made towards reconciliation and understanding between peoples which yesterday were still at war with a view to common co-operation in an aim whose realisation is eminently desirable.

Without abandoning any of the criticisms formulated by its representative on the Labour Commission of the Peace Conference, to which it intends to endeavour to give effect in agreement with the other national workers' organisations, the C. G. T. will go to Washington with a firm determination to work for the realisation of international labour legislation based on the demands of the proletariat expressed at the International Trade Union Congress at Berne.

Faithful to the principles affirmed at the Conferences which took place during the War, which found a definite expression at Berne, the French proletarian organisation affirms the necessity of unifying the conditions of labour throughout the world and of realising a minimum of justice and of guarantees for the workers.

The proletariat organised in the International has affirmed, and the Governments and the diplomats have had to recognise, that the realisation of this principle is an indispensable condition of the establishment of a lasting peace. There can be no equilibrium in the world unless the workers of all countries are able to enjoy equal conditions and a status which is the same for all.

It is these conceptions, as to which the Central Trade Union Organisations are agreed, that the General Confederation of Labour intends to develop at Washington. In sending representatives to this Conference, the proletariat of this country is not yielding to a desire to enter into relations with the representatives of governments and employers, but is affirming the clear determination of the workers of the whole world to take an effective part, and to play an essential rôle in the development of world conditions, and to exercise permanent and effective control over the operation and development of the new international organism.

Further, it does not forget that the International Labour Organisation is an integral part of the League of Nations, the imperious necessity for which it affirms together with the whole world of workers. The League by the united effort of all peoples, of all the organised workers, is capable of putting an end once and for all to military wars and to economic wars.

The International Conference at Washington is the first in date of the manifestations of the League of Nations, and as such, the workers cannot dissociate themselves from it. They are obtaining the first satisfaction of their wishes in the admission of the countries which yesterday were enemies, and in the fact that the action of the workers has succeeded in giving effect to their views for bringing about a reconciliation of all nations by common action based on progress, justice and peace.

It is in this attitude of mind that the General Confederation of Labour is about to take part in the deliberations of the First International Conference on Labour Legislation.

It will work, in agreement with the workers' International, for the recognition of the rights of labour throughout the world and for the freedom of action of all the proletariats, including the Russian proletariat, which are united in a common conception of liberation by means of regenerated labour".

The criticisms advanced at the Congress aimed especially at showing that the participation of the C. G. T. in the International Labour Organisation was a demonstration of collaboration between classes, that the fact of going to Washington to engage in discussion with employers was irreconcilable with the resolution passed at the Lyons Congress declaring that "the Trade Union Movement cannot be anything but revolutionary", and particularly that the International Labour Office was an organ of "social peace" with which Trade Unionists could not co-operate.

In reply to these criticisms, Mr. Dumoulin, after recalling the common action of all the members of the C. G. T. in favour of the League of Nations and its unanimous attitude of confidence at the time of the arrival of President Wilson at Paris, expressed himself as follows in regard to what was called "collaboration between classes":—

"I claim that we are not by any means engaging in collaboration between classes in the sense in which you intend to apply that term. Unlike political parties which live on principles and doctrines, which are bound to confine and limit themselves to doctrines and principles, trade unionism has to take account of daily life, of the facts of every day. We are not like you socialists, free to disregard conditions of work, wages, old age pensions: we have not the option, like you, of leaving the old people behind for the sake of principles. We must, in our Trade Union activities, have regard at every

moment to actual life. And yet, in applying this reasoning to the Socialist party, I am well aware that that party itself, in the exercise of its parliamentary functions, is obliged to take account of the needs of every day in the world of labour. Its claim upon us is that it is the interpreter in Parliament of the desires of the workers. In its Parliamentary aspect can it be anything but a Parliamentary group continually engaged in discussion in a certain place with bourgeois, with bourgeois representatives?

Socialist Trade Unionists, when you are asked this question: Do you carry on in Parliament collaboration between classes? Do you carry on, when you discuss labour laws, laws on old age pensions, when you discuss the improvement of the condition of your fellow creatures, do you carry on collaboration between classes? — you will reply: "In our opinion, No." You defend from day to day the interests of those who have elected you to defend their interests.

At Washington, we did nothing but what you do every day in Parliament. At the International Labour Office our comrades do nothing but what you do every day in Parliament. In their double character as social reformers and advocates of the workers' claims, your deputies are the interpreters of your demands. They are not in your eyes class collaborators, or if they are, it is you who appoint them collaborators with the bourgeoisie, since they are in permanent contact with bourgeois of every shade, with representatives who are sworn enemies of the working classes, and since they receive a salary from the Government for carrying on their work.

If you wish to pursue a different course in the future, it is for you to say so. For our part, we claim to have done nothing at the International Labour Conference but what is done every day in the bourgeois Parliament of this country, and when our comrades discuss, propose, defend and make demands at the International Labour Office, they are only doing what you do in Parliament from the workers' point of view. Your criticisms, therefore, on this point, are not justified."

But the question of the relations of the C. G. T. with the International Labour Organisation was chiefly dealt with, and at very great length, by Mr. Jouhaux, the Secretary General, in the course of a speech which occupied the greater part of the fourth day's sitting.

In regard to participation at the Washington Conference, Mr. Jouhaux expressed himself as follows:—

When you say: "Your action in going to the International Labour Conference at Washington is a violation of the Lyons Congress" you make a two-fold mistake, because the General Report presented to the Congress at Lyons dealt with this question, and its very adoption in its entirety by the Congress was at the same time an adoption of the principle of participation in the International Labour Conference at Washington.

I say nothing of the reproach of having been paid by the Government: Mr. Dumoulin has dealt effectively with that. If it were necessary to insist upon it further, I should ask those who will ask us to-morrow or the day after to-morrow to sign their certificates of attendance at the Congress in order to enable them to receive the allowances granted by their municipality or their General Council, if they are entitled to reproach us with having gone to Washington at the national expense.

I said that you made a two-fold mistake. I have explained one of these mistakes, that with regard to the Lyons Congress. I wish to demonstrate another, which, in my eyes, is the most important.

Was it at the Lyons Congress that this question was submitted for the first time to the Trade Union organisations of this country? It would be impossible to reply in the affirmative without forgetting the discussions which took place at the General Confederation of Labour, those which took place in the Trade Union organisations, and those which took place in the Press, regarding the participation of the General Confederation of Labour in the Peace Conference, regarding the International Labour Charter, regarding the Leeds programme, and regarding the resolution of the Berne International, in which our position was fixed in advance.

All that had the effect of committing the whole of the workers' organisations, all that had the effect of definitely raising the question, and the Lyons Congress, in adopting the General Report, gave us the necessary authorisation to proceed to Washington.

Yesterday, Mr. Dumoulin, reading a document of the General Confederation of Labour which does it honour, spoke of the attitude adopted by the delegates of the trade union organisations towards, not perhaps the personality of President Wilson, but the idea which he represented and the hopes which he embodied. Have we no right to recall that to-day? Is it not our duty to-day to put ourselves again in the state of mind in which we then were, with the hopes which we then entertained? Is it not our duty to remind those who desire to forget it that the General Confederation of Labour was at one time alone in this country in affirming the hopes of the workers in regard to a peace among nations founded on independence and liberty?"

There is one man who ought to remember this, the man (*) who set out for America with me to see President Wilson before he came to France, who shared with me the idea that the League of Nations would bring to the world the possibility of a lasting peace, the possibility of a development in social progress and liberty.

(*) Mr. Marcel Cachin.

I cannot recall without emotion the struggle that we had and how permission was refused to us to go to the other side of the Atlantic.

We were, at that moment, in the eyes of a large part of the French Press, and of a section of the English Proletariat, Bolsheviks whose action must be stopped at all costs:

And what were we saying? Precisely what we are saying today, what we repeat at this Congress and from this platform. We remain faithful to the idea of not taking up a rigid attitude of doctrinaire impotence, but of employing every means and following every road in order to advance the idea which we have embraced and to endeavour to realize it as far as possible. We remain faithful to the views which we have always held, and the hopes which we cherished are not of less value today because they have not been realised.

Tell me, then, all you who have carried on a campaign against the League of Nations, all you who have carried on a campaign against Wilson, the representative of the bourgeoisie, you who have joined in the reactionary campaigns, are you in a proper position to reproach us with not having succeeded when you have done everything possible to prevent our succeeding?

A *Delegate*: That is not an argument; that is not to the point.

Mr. *Jouhaux*: You say that is not to the point; I say that it is very much to the point, — it is very much to the point because, if it has been possible in this country to adopt in the name of this nation an attitude of scepticism and irony, if it has been possible to cast ridicule on the idea of the League of Nations, it is because this scepticism, this irony have found a sympathetic echo among the masses of the people. If on the other hand the masses of the people had risen as we rose against those who indulged in irony, against those who attempted day by day to undermine the confidence of the masses of the people in a new international body, it is very probable that the campaign could not have been carried so far as it has been, and that President Wilson would not have been compelled to repudiate what he had said.

I have sought to keep in view three points in the complaints which were brought against us. I have sought to show that the International Labour Conference at Washington was not the product of a sudden decision, but the logical sequel of a continuous process, which was continually and carefully followed by the Executive Committee of the C. G. T. It was, I have the right to say, always in agreement with the views of the working classes, at least of the majority of them. The responsibilities of the International Conference at Washington came in question at the very beginning of the negotiations at the General Peace Conference. They came in question at the moment when you gave me a mandate to go to the Peace Conference to

advocate there, in the presence of the diplomats, in the presence of representatives of the Governments, the International Labour Charter.

This mandate was acknowledged by the General Confederation of Labour, it was acknowledged by the Trade Union International; for the Berne Conference, which was preliminary to the final reconstitution of the trade union International, had also given me this mandate.

I took part in the Peace Conference and I advocated our views. I certainly do not pretend to have accomplished a work so great that the bourgeois Governments have crumbled to pieces under it, but I claim to have done my duty. I claim to have introduced a new principle which existed perhaps before that date in the minds of revolutionaries, but did not exist in the realm of facts. It does exist there to-day, and what we have to do is to secure for it its maximum development.

That idea is the principle of international control which you find even in the Soviet documents. It is a principle without which there can be no continuous progress in the world. We have obtained the acceptance of that principle. That may not be, it is true, in the view of a section of the French working classes, a revolutionary act; it may even be — interpretations are so different and the French language is so rich — it may even be collaboration between classes. It is none the less a fundamental principle, an essential principle which the thinkers, the philosophers and the sociologists of all periods and of all schools have entertained, a fundamental principle without which there is no federation of the peoples, no practical internationalism. And that is the principle to which I hold."

Mr Jouhaux then considered the work and the future of the International Labour Organisation and especially of the International Labour Office.

"We went to the Peace Conference to advocate our views and to secure the triumph of an international organisation of labour. The result of our participation was the International Conference at Washington and its logical and normal sequel: the International Labour Office.

When you speak of collaboration between classes — Mr Dumoulin expressed himself yesterday polemically on that question — I wish to observe that the International Conference at Washington cannot be treated as a simple question of principle; it is a human question, it dominates all principles, and derives its social character from that fact. That is what you will not understand, that is what you will not grasp. What you will not see is that, though it is possible for you with your trade union organisations to defend your wages and conditions of work, there are millions and millions of workers in the world reduced to a condition of slavery, enjoying no liberty. They, like you, have a right to existence; they, like you, have a right to live, and are entitled to your active

sympathy. That is the position which we went to Washington to defend.

If we had only had to think of ourselves, we were in a good position in regard to all those points. We had, for example, won the eight hours day, — for it was not given to us out of pure benevolence by the capitalists, it was won through the power of the workers' organisation; and I have a right to say that those who have attempted to deride that victory are the least capable of securing respect for it.

It was this profoundly human question that we went to the Washington Conference to consider, and those who were there are well aware that it was not a question of cordial discussions, but of a clash of ideas, a clash of claims, from which a solution was to emerge which we wished to be absolutely in conformity not with the French point of view, but with the international trade union point of view decided upon at Berne and at Amsterdam.

I challenge anyone to prove that what I affirm is not true. The writings of foreign comrades have been flung into the debate, and an interpretation has been given to them which does not belong to them. An attempt has been made to use them as a weapon against us. I do not even wish to know what is the position occupied to-day by those who stood up against us yesterday.

When you declare that capitalist imperialism is at the bottom of all wars, when you claim that commercial competition creates tension between nations and rivalries of interests, and provokes war, you are right and we agree with you, but then what is to be done? Ought one to adopt a rigid doctrinaire attitude, to look down from the height of one's lofty conceptions on the miserable contingencies of humanity? Or should one come down into the real world, come to grips with facts, and endeavour to remove what is bad in them? That is the whole question.

We wish to reduce the causes of conflagration as much as possible, and we are going to seek them wherever they may be found. There is one region to which our attention must be specially directed, i. e. the economic region. In that region there is a task which seems to us of the first importance, that is the equalisation of the position of the workers throughout the world, the application throughout the world of the social advantages obtained by those possessing organisation and fighting strength. That is the task which we wish to accomplish.

It may be that these considerations do not count for those who judge life only from the point of view of commercial competition. It does count for us. We know its value; we know that it lies at the very foundation of all social action, and we want that idea to triumph. We desire that there should no longer be in the world young Hindoos of 11 or 12 years of age working 14 or 16 hours a day for other peoples

profit. We do not want any more young Japanese working 14 or 16 hours a day; we want no more negroes in Africa driven to work with the whip and under degrading conditions of servitude. We do not want slavery to continue to exist in our Colonies. We wish liberty to be the common heritage of all humanity. That is what we are fighting for, that is why we are in the International Labour Office.

I do not wish to enter here upon an examination of the general international situation and of the necessities for reform and action which it demands, but I ask you whether there are not in the world at the present time many cases of war due to capitalist competition. America and Japan, America and England, France and England, Italy and France, Germany and France, Hungary and France, everywhere economic competition is evident, everywhere it controls the rulers, everywhere diplomacy is creating new causes of war. Will you then reproach us with attempting to fight with a view to removing competition and to getting rid of causes of war? If you do not reproach us with it, then cease your insinuations.

The International Labour Office, appointed by the Washington International Conference, is not an instrument of collaboration between classes; it is an instrument of international control in the application of international social legislation, and it concerns me little that Mr. Millerand — whose corrupt methods I hate as much as ever I did — should have gone to Geneva to carry a message of social peace; it concerns me little that such a political farce should have been played; what does concern me is to know whether the International Labour Office responds to the hopes which were placed in it, and up to now it has responded to them.

What concerns me is to know whether the International Labour Office fulfils the task which was entrusted to it, and contrary to the assertions which are made in certain sections of the Press, I, for my part, as a responsible member of the International Labour Organisation, declare that it does fulfil the functions which have been assigned to it, and I say that that is the reason for the attacks which are made upon it by the Right, with which you are unconsciously associating yourselves.

There is another question of capital importance, that of raw materials. That question, which the Washington International Conference would not accept, the Governing Body of the International Labour Office has taken up again. Why? Because it intends that the International Labour Office should not be limited to the supervision of the application of social laws, but should take part also in the regulation of the distribution of raw materials, not according to the degree of solvency of the nations, but according to their industrial needs, according to their vital needs. Is not that a revolutionary theory, is not that a step towards a new constitution? Who will dare then to make the least objection? Are you now

reduced to saying that all improvements obtained are so many obstacles to the accomplishment of the revolution?

A delegate — Perhaps.

Mr. Jouhaux : Perhaps ! If that is your idea it condemns your presence in the trade union organisation. In any case it is not our idea, it has never been the idea of the Workers' movement.

I wish to invoke the memory of a man who, answering the same question at a Social Congress, protested against this idea that reforms are counter-revolutionary manifestations, protested against that absurd and idiotic thesis that to raise the individual is to make him less capable of accomplishing his emancipation.

M. Jouhaux then read a speech delivered by Jaurès at the Socialist Congress at Toulouse (October 1908, page 333 of the Report).

M. Jouhaux : "That is what Jaurès stated in 1908, and I say that we are conscious of being in agreement with that doctrine. We also think that to give the workers the maximum of liberty and well-being is not to arrest revolutionary development, but, on the contrary, to hasten it.

We have accomplished this task; and if the International Labour Office is not an organ from which we receive directions but one to which we give them, that is sufficient to justify our presence in that Office, to make our action legitimate, and our attitude in harmony with the interests and aspiration of the working classes."

On the question of the International Labour Organisation, the speech of Mr. Million (Rhône) in the debate on the future programme of the C. G. T. should also be noted. He desired that the International Labour Office should become still more an instrument of research for preparing for the use of the working class the means of action necessary for the revolution.

3. *The Economic Council of Labour.*

The General Confederation of Labour at the beginning of 1919 proposed the formation of a national Economic Council composed of representatives of the organised workers, industrial leaders, technical experts, and the State. This proposal led only to a scheme of the French Government which was unacceptable to the workers and which, in any case, was not carried into effect. The Lyons Congress therefore decided on the constitution by the C. G. T. of an Economic Council of Labour (Conseil Economique du Travail). "In view of the decay of the executive power", M. Jouhaux stated at Lyons, "the workers should constitute in common with the technical workers and public officials who accept the minimum programme of the C. G. T. an Economic Council of Labour which will attack without further delay the immediate problems and the general problems of production and exchange."

In pursuance of this decision, the Economic Council of Labour was constituted and commenced operations on the 8th January, 1920. It is composed as follows. At its head is a Committee of thirteen members representing the four great organisations composing the Council, i. e. the General Confederation of Labour, the National Federation of Public Officials (*Fédération Nationale des Fonctionnaires*), the National Federation of Co-operative Societies (*Fédération Nationale des Coopératives*), the Union of Technical Workers in Industry, Commerce and Agriculture (*Union syndicale de Techniciens d'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Agriculture*).

This composition gave rise to a certain number of criticisms of the Economic Council of Labour which were expressed at the Orleans Congress. Certain delegates would have preferred the Economic Council to be recruited solely from the General Confederation of Labour. Others, and in particular Mr. Launat, a former member of the Economic Council who had resigned his membership, denounced the presence on the Council of bourgeois elements and demanded that the Council should be composed "only of Trade Unionists, i. e. of wage-earners".

The activities of the Economic Council, which, during 1920 were very considerable, led particularly to the scheme for the nationalisation of the railways, and this scheme aroused the criticism of certain members of the Congress on the ground that it maintained class privileges inasmuch as it rejected the expropriation, pure and simple, of the shareholders and debenture holders and admitted the principle of purchase. Finally, other delegates, on the very first day of the Congress, reproached the Economic Council with not reflecting revolutionary sentiments and with endeavouring to consolidate the existing social system, inasmuch as it proclaimed the necessity for production.

Mr. Million endeavoured, as he had done in the case of other questions, to clear the ground at the outset, and to show that in certain of the criticisms there was a good deal of wounded *amour propre* and personal bitterness.

Mr. Jouhaux vigorously emphasised this view and explained that the relations between technical and manual workers might be in the administration of the national economic system.

"Now", he said, "let us pass to the Economic Council of Labour. What is the objection to this Institution, which some people have sought to attribute to directions received from Washington and Geneva?"

"The Economic Council of Labour is a creation of the General Federation of Labour. It is an institution of our C. G. T., created by us and controlled by us; it receives its directions from us.

"When you say that it was Messrs Bernard Lavergne and Gide who presided over the preparation of the principles

on which we established our schemes of nationalisation you lie".

Mr. Launat. "It was you who said so."

Mr. Jouhaux. "That is a lie, for no such thing has ever been said.

"It is the opposite of the truth.

"To begin with, what is Mr. Bernard Lavergne? A writer on *Le Temps*? Nothing of the kind, a delegate of the Co-operative Societies on the Economic Council of Labour.

"The administration of the National Economic System? But you have the draft of the scheme on your table. The delegates have only to read it to convince themselves of the falsehood of your statements. What we put before the Congress, what we ask of the organisations, is that they should examine that draft of a rational organisation of production. It is conceived on principles which are the opposite of collaboration between classes; on principles which are related to the necessities with which we are confronted, and it takes into account the experience of other countries.

"When you come here, as you do, to play the demagogue by trying to persuade the workers that they can place the technical workers under their control, can command them, enslave them, you are playing an unworthy part.

"It is in entire contradiction to your latest expressions, in which you seek to raise your action to a higher level.

"If the mind is to regulate the destinies of humanity, it is necessary first of all not to imprison the brain and to drag down the intellect.

"We want the antagonism which has existed from the beginning of time between those who work with their brains and those who work with their muscles to disappear. We want to associate brain work with muscular work in the general interest. That is the idea that we want to realise, and it is criminal of you to attempt to under-value one of these elements. No, there is no superiority, but neither is there any inferiority; and just as we have stood up against arbitrary, inhuman and anti-social exploitation by employers, I stand up and I ask the intellectuals to stand up with me, against their subordination to the workers.

"Such principles of the demagogue have cost the Russian Revolution dear. In order to repair this error, they are obliged to-day to give the technical workers a position better beyond all comparison than that which they are able to obtain here even under the capitalist system. Is that what you want to arrive at?"

He then proceeded to show what nationalisation might be in the view of the C. G. T., the principles on which it rests and the conditions under which the experiment might be attempted.

"When you speak of schemes of nationalisation, you forget that such schemes have no validity for us except so

far as they are accepted by the Trade Union Organisations. Not only do we supervise the action of the technical workers in our Economic Council of Labour, but we ask for and call for supervision by the workers' organisations of the work which we are accomplishing. Are not these sufficient guarantees to entitle us to say to you that so long as you do not bring forward any argument which condemns the principles on which our scheme of nationalisation rests, you have no right to rule it out?

What are the principles on which it rests?

Nationalisation has been a great deal talked about during the last fifty years. It was in the programmes of the pioneer groups fifty years ago. But what was the nationalisation of those days? It was either a financial monopoly, or an increase of the coercive power of the State. It meant that the State laid its hands on a part of production with a view to administering it for its political interests and with its political machinery. We were, and still are, against this form of nationalisation. We do not wish to place in the hands of the State greater power for the purpose of increasing its ability to coerce; we do not wish to set up new officials. We do not wish to set up once more particular groups of workers outside the general body of the working class. What we want is to place the means of directing production in the hands of those who represent the general interests of the community. Our formula is not State ownership, or corporate ownership, but the community as master of its own destinies. Our formula is the collaboration of producers and consumers, and when you have proved to me that that is not a Socialist principle, taking the word in its general sense, when you have proved to me that that is not a principle of social transformation, then you will have proved your case. Until then, you had better be silent.

Mr. Lannat: Explain your scheme of purchase.

"Purchase — we conceive it in the form of expropriation of the shareholder and the taking of the debenture-holder's security by way of guarantee. If those of you who were speaking yesterday have taken a course of political economy, you must know the difference which exists between the shareholder and the debenture-holder. I do not even ask you to consider the social difference, but we are bound to take account of it, and we have as much right as the Russian Soviet Republic to be opportunists when circumstances compel us to be so. We do not want to bring into the field against the scheme of nationalisation the whole body of debenture-holders; we do not want to allow the Railway Companies, who have spent more than 20 millions on the counter-offensive which they have been carrying on against us, to have the support of too large a force of public opinion. We want the nationalisation scheme of the General Federation of Labour

to become a reality, and we ought not to misunderstand the situation which confronts us.

"It is easy for you to misunderstand it, to say 'let us keep on the plane of pure principles'. Meanwhile the Companies will obtain the adoption of the Le Trocquer scheme or the Loucheur scheme. Meanwhile they are consolidating their power and making it impossible for us to resist or to arrive at any result whatever.

"If we claimed that our schemes of nationalisation would accomplish the social revolution to which we all aspire, your criticisms would be well-founded; but you know very well that we only regard our schemes as measures of progress on the road to revolution. You know very well that what we desire is to place in the hands of the workers a measure of control which will give them the necessary apprenticeship in the administration of the economic and social affairs of the nations. You know very well that, in conformity with the doctrine which we have always held, we wish the workers to acquire the practical knowledge which is indispensable to them for the realisation of their historic mission. You know very well that we want to associate the technical, intellectual and manual workers in a common endeavour for liberation.

"It is this social experiment that we wish to attempt, and if you regard such a social experiment as a counter-revolutionary activity, you must try to prove it by something better than unjustified accusations and paradoxical remarks. We are no longer living in the time for philosophising; we are no longer living in the time when our movement only carried on the struggle in the region of theory. We have reached the time for setting to work. All is ready for commencing operations, and we have got to show that we know how to build. We have got to show that our claim to take the direction of affairs is a justifiable and legitimate claim. It is necessary, therefore, that the Economic Council of Labour, while still pursuing the realisation of our social demands, should show that it is able at the present moment to offer solutions of practical questions in harmony with the general interests of the community.

"That is what we are engaged in; that is why the Economic Council of Labour exists; and it matters little to us whether we proceed in a more or less melodramatic and striking fashion or not; the necessity for actual work remains the same. The hesitating and incredulous stop on the road under the shelter of formulas; the believing and courageous pursue their way."

It is worthy of remark that later in the Congress a speaker on the Minority side, Mr. Sirolle, declared that he was a supporter of nationalisation on industrial principles, because he saw in it "possibilities of doing something which the capitalist class could not accept, because it would constitute a decrease of their class privileges". He, therefore, asked the comrades "to consider carefully a scheme, the application

of which would make it necessary to transform all social systems, and would give to the working class of this country the direction of all production ”.

It was in relation to the Economic Council of Labour that the question of production under the capitalist system was slightly touched upon by certain speakers on the Minority side. No clear reply was given to them until later, when it was given by Mr. Merrheim in the course of the debate on trade union policy.

The beginning of an important passage in his speech is quoted below : — Mr. Merrheim followed these remarks with extracts from pamphlets of Lenin, showing to what an extent the Russian worker had lost the love of work as a result of constantly hearing it said that one ought not to “ produce under the capitalist system ”.

“ In closing I will reply to a final question which has been raised here. Allusion has been made to the theory of the General Confederation of Labour in regard to production. It has been said that we ask the workers to over-produce, which is a lie. Unfortunately the worker is too often impelled to over-production by the system of piece-work and bonuses. The exceptional wages of a very small minority of metal workers, amounting to as much as 50 or 60 francs a day during the war, how were they earned? By a mad over-production, which exhausted the men or women making such efforts in a few months. We told these people that they were mad to over-produce. But in this matter the militant workers have a duty from the point of view of morality, of dignity and of conscience. Ought we, as some people suggest, to say to the workers that they should sabotage production under the capitalist system? For my part I refuse to tell the workers not to produce, and nevertheless that is what you will be obliged to do if you adopt the communist doctrine. You must appeal to and excite every kind of hatred, the hatred of work among others, and say to the masses : ‘ you must not produce’. That is to appeal to the hatred of work. It is, believe me, to create in the heart and mind of the worker such a state of feeling that in a revolutionary period, when you are masters of power, the working class from whom you demand a greater effort of production will not understand, and will tell you that it is not necessary to produce, because you have told them so often and so long that production should be reduced, and that there was no necessity to intensify it in order to increase the general well-being. ”

4. *International Federation of Trade Unions.*

The Congress of Lyons had ratified the reconstitution of the International Federation of Trade Unions carried out at Amsterdam in July and August 1919 ; but the propaganda which had been going on for many months for the constitution

of a new Trade Union International affiliated to the Communist International of Moscow, made it necessary to return to the question at the Orleans Congress. The question was debated especially during the last two days devoted to the discussion of trade union policy, and it was then that Mr. Merrheim called particular attention to the determination of the Russian rulers to destroy the Trade Union International in order to subordinate the trade union movement to the political movement. But during the discussion of the general report the Confederal Office had pointed out the spirit of liberty and good faith in which the Amsterdam International had been reconstituted and the positive work which it had accomplished in 1919 and 1920.

The subject was first referred to by Mr. Dumoulin in the following terms :

“ At the end of our demonstration the defence of the Trade Union International will be so much the easier, inasmuch as those who claim to-day to show us the road to internationalism have been seeking it for two years and have not yet found it. Those who come to us to-day and say ‘ here is a new International ’ have not been able after two years to get on to the road to internationalism.

“ As for us, we have silenced our common hatreds and our particular sentiments in order to reconstruct the Labour International. We went with you socialists to Berne in February 1919 to reconstruct the Trade Union International. If you have not succeeded in reconstructing yours, do not impute that crime to us. We reconstructed the Trade Union International in February 1919. We asked our friends in Belgium to forget what they had had to suffer in the war, just as we asked our comrades in the devastated areas to forget the disasters, sufferings and hatred which the war had brought into their surroundings.

“ We did not waste time in everlasting petty discussions on principles and conditions. We made up our minds on the necessity of reconstructing our Trade Union International. We had no right, and we have no right now, to ask the American workers to find another secretary than comrade Gompers. We have no such right. In our International the various central organisations preserve their autonomy in the direction of their own affairs. We have no right to say to the six million German workers that they must choose other officials, any more than we have the right to meddle in the internal affairs of the English proletariat organised in its trade unions. It is with the benefit of these conditions of liberty for each country that we have united at the present moment twenty-three million workers in the Trade Union International. You are at liberty to say that this Trade Union International has not produced the revolution, that it has not overturned the world. I merely ask you to find for yourselves the road to internationalism which we have found.

Here in this Congress, in obedience to the demands of our comrade Totti, who regards me as his master, we will make our mutual confessions. We will invite you to this mutual examination of conscience. Have you the right to compromise the existence of the Trade Union International by bringing against it, not on your own initiative — (you cannot have the right because you have sought them elsewhere) — have you the right to produce the accusations against the Trade Union International contained in the conditions which you have brought forward? If you claim this right we will go over the same road together and give words their full meaning.

“Those who are to-day at the head of the organisation of the Amsterdam International are social traitors, social traitors according to the conditions which you are called upon to apply. You cannot apply them, and you have no right to destroy our International which we have reconstructed under the guarantee of liberty and good faith”.

The positive action of the International Federation of Trade Unions was explained in its main outline by M. Jouhaux. The first part of his account especially deserves to be quoted.

“Tommasi has used as a weapon against us here the Treaty of Versailles. He has only forgotten one thing, that the movement that has been constantly taking place and is taking place for the modification of the Treaty of Versailles in the economic domain is the work of the Trade Union International. What is the present position of the question of coal?

“The military men talk about the occupation of the Ruhr district and the employment of force under the pretext of obtaining for us the coal which we need — a fundamental error but an error which cannot be corrected except by the action of the workers’ organisations united internationally and acting internationally. And, indeed, comrades when you reproach the Trade Union International with its practices and its conceptions you are wilfully forgetting a capital point — the attitude taken by the International Federation of Trade Unions. You forget that we have declared *urbi et orbi* that our solution consisted in a harmonisation of efforts, in taking assistance to the workers of Germany in the matter of food.

“You forget that we declared ourselves in agreement with our German comrades and said to them ‘if one of these days our military men take it into their heads to occupy the Ruhr district and to compel you to work at the point of the bayonet, we shall be at your side to support your act of revolt against such slavery’.

“You forget too the resolution of the International Miners Congress at Geneva, passed unanimously, which declared: the question of coal is an international question, it can only be solved internationally, and which called for the

constitution of an international organisation for the distribution of coal throughout the world.

“And who has been entrusted with the constitution of this organisation, who was unanimously nominated by the International Miners Congress to accomplish this task? The International Labour Office, which you want to disqualify and to render incapable of accomplishing its work.

“Clearly this solution is not what is desired by the profiteers and middlemen, but this international solution is a rational solution. It is a revolutionary solution in the region of facts, a solution on which the life of the nations depends whatever may be the form of their political constitution; and you must have perceived this when you saw how almost the whole of the French press turned against the English miners when they threatened to strike. You must have realised that at such a moment there was a necessity for that international organisation.

“Let us consider a little the international situation, for after all it is not enough to keep on talking about imperialism, and we must not be for ever seeking the tares which may be growing among our wheat. We must look at the international situation. We, who demanded immediately after the Armistice the constitution of an international body for the distribution of raw materials as one of the essential foundations of the new order, and as one of the most important means of removing the industrial rivalries which give birth to capitalist imperialism, we are in position to say to-day that everyone has felt the necessity of turning to the doctrine which we expressed. We procured the adoption of that doctrine by the Trade Union International in its entirety, and whatever may be your conceptions or your views you cannot get away from it. It lies at the very basis of the international life of the peoples. It alone is capable of giving to the peoples the possibility of living and developing in economic independence, while our impotence has made possible the economic slavery from which at the present moment we cannot escape.

“That is the work of the Trade Union International which you are attacking. That ‘yellow’ Trade Union International, that International of ‘traitors’ follows only one principle, one ideal — to serve the international proletarian cause and the cause of the peoples themselves. It is the work of this International that an attempt is being made to disqualify, against which the most monstrous accusations are brought. If we protest to-day it is because not only an indictment but a declaration of war has been made against us.

“The Trade Union International is to be replaced by the International Trade Union section of the Third International of Moscow. We who have reconstituted the international forces, who have carried on an international action, we must bow before those who, apart from the Russian militants,

have been unable to accomplish anything whatsoever, and represent nothing”.

“Tomorrow the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions will meet in London, there to discuss the question of rationalising production — in the spirit as well as in the letter — there to repeat that although international action may vary in its methods it must yet strive for one object, and pursue one ideal. And it is this International that you wish to condemn? It is against this International that you hurl your anathemas, against which your ridiculous excommunications have been hurled? It is against this International that you have made yourselves the mouthpiece of those who probably do not even understand the conditions under which we are developing, or the necessities to which we must submit. Not tomorrow's International Congress alone will reply to the greater excommunication; the past action of the Trade Union International will answer as well.

“You speak of the Treaty of Versailles: you protest, and with reason, against the Treaty of Versailles; but who has achieved positive, practical results in attempting to mitigate the tyranny of the Treaty? You or we? The question answers itself: we alone have achieved these results.

“A nation was reduced to famine, a proletariat threatened with extinction; the Trade Union International arose and appealed to its Proletarian constituents; and food trains, bearers of hope and life, were immediately sent to the population of Vienna.

“We should have done the same for Moscow had it been possible, and you have no right to doubt us. If today we have taken an stand against ideas which are foreign to us, do not forget that we have never taken our stand against the Russian nation. As for proletarian Austria, as for the working classes of Austria, they were able to protect themselves against the forces of reaction, owing to the solidarity of the Trade Union International. Then, when the White Terror raged in Hungary, when hundreds of militants were tortured and executed, who arose in the name of universal Trade Unionism? The Trade Union International, who endeavoured to give a practical expression of its aid. Do you forget that at Vienna the representatives of reactionary Hungary, delegates of European reaction, were forced to come to terms with the Trade Union International?

5. *Vote on the General Report.*

The discussion ended in a vote on the General Report. The result of the vote, issued subject to revision was as follows: —

Voters	2225
In favour of the adoption of the General Report	1482 votes
Against	691
Abstentions	52

This vote should be sufficient proof that the Congress wished to forget the grave accusations which for months past had been levelled against the Confederal leaders at public meetings and in the press. It could scarcely do less, seeing that with the exception of certain accusations which had found no echo and which were manifestly censured by the Assembly, no accuser had come forward and no accusations had been formulated during the Congress.

The opinion of the Congress, however, became even more explicit in a sharply worded declaration against “the slander of the militants”. The text of this declaration, signed by numerous Trade Unions, reads as follows:

“The undersigned, delegates present at the Congress, after having heard the discussion in connection with the adoption of the General Report submitted to the representatives of Trade Union Organisations incorporated in the General Confederation of Labour;

Declare, that in the course of this discussion, none of the written or verbal accusations publicly made at Trade Union or Public Meetings have been confirmed, much less substantiated, during the debates before the Congress.

In view of the fact that these accusations clearly have no foundation, and further that no one is present to advance them in the Congress, the undersigned demand that the Congress do denounce and condemn the campaign undertaken many months ago, which became more intensive during the weeks preceding the Congress. This campaign was based exclusively on insults, calumny, lies, intrigues, and unjust and disloyal procedure:

The undersigned likewise demand that the Congress do condemn those newspapers, whether or not they represent officially political parties and tendencies, which have made themselves the instruments and even the instigators of this campaign;

The French working classes know today that the calumnies uttered against the militants at the head of Trade Union organisations and of the General Confederation of Labour are the work of unscrupulous opponents who have deliberately attempted to compromise the activities and the legal authority of the General Confederation of Labour, in order to satisfy their personal ambition and enmity:

The undersigned demand that the Congress do call on all workers and their Trade Union Organisations to take resolute steps against all who attempt to continue the evil practices herein denounced, as these practices would only sacrifice the advantages already obtained by the working classes, and compromise the prospects of the future”.

The reading of this resolution provoked violent protest from the Minority.

Actuated by a spirit of conciliation, and on the assurance of the minority that there was no need to remember “unjust”

accusations, and that such a declaration would lead to secession, Mr. Jouhaux demanded that this motion should not be put to the vote. It served, however, to confirm what was known in the Congress as the "total absence of accusers".

FINANCIAL REPORT

In the pamphlet issued by the Confederal Committee, a Financial Report was added to the General Report. This Report gave rise to no discussion but it is interesting to draw attention to a few of the principal figures.

The number of Confederal stamps purchased from the 1st June, 1919, to the 31st May, 1920, amounts to 16,130,784 for the National Federation, and to 16,582,176 for the Departmental Unions, giving a total of 407,931.95 fr., for the Federations, and 424,469 fr., for the Departmental Unions.

The total receipts of the Central Office at this period amounted to 1,215,486.55 fr., and the expenditure to fr. 703,923.60.

The cash in hand on the 31st May, 1919, totalled fr. 53,922.85, and 565,545.80 fr. on the 21st May, 1920.

THE FUTURE PROGRAMME OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR.

The discussion on this part of the Agenda should have been an extremely lengthy one; in fact, however, the Congress limited itself to a discussion of trade union policy, which occupied the whole of the fifth and sixth days. Some attention was paid to questions previously discussed, but otherwise the debate dealt essentially with the relations of the C. G. T. to the socialist party and to the Moscow International.

This debate had been preceded at the end of the fourth day by the reading of a long message from the Russian Trade Union Delegation, then at Berlin. The message was at first received with sympathy which gave way to amazement at the attacks contained in it. The complete text of this letter was published by the "Voix du Peuple" (No. 22, October 1920, pp. 624-628) pending the publication of the Report of the Congress.

A declaration by Mr. Jouhaux closed this incident: "The Russian comrades suffer" he said "but they are ignorant of our activities; consequently I do not blame them. They have been misled, and Russian trade unionism has been furnished with lying and biased information by the authors of the accusations contained in their letter".

A speech by Mr. Frossard, and another by Mr. Meerheim, delivered during the debate on trade union policy, are worthy of note.

Mr. Frossard, General Secretary of the Socialist Party, whose presence had led to protests from certain members of the Majority, attended the Congress as an official trade union delegate and not as the official of any political organisation. The Congress, after certain difficulties, permitted him to speak.

Mr. Frossard's speech differed very greatly from anything that was expected of him. He not only proclaimed the necessity for an autonomous trade union movement in relation to other political bodies, but declared that "the seizure of power with a view to social transformation in a country like France is inconceivable without an agreement on a basis of equality between the General Confederation of Labour and the Socialist Party". But he demanded that the two movements should not ignore or disown each other, should not act independently of or in opposition to each other, but should, on the contrary, unite for joint action.

Mr. Frossard did not intend to dwell on his long journey in Russia, but he asked that the plight of the Russian working classes should be taken into account, for their terrible position would inevitably have an influence on the revolutionary psychology of Russia.

With regard to relations between the Trade Union International and the political International, he stated that, as far as he knew, the question was still an open one, and he considered that the Trade Union International would become whatever its component trade unions wished it to be. "None the less," he said, "it is a fact that you may yet regret the formation of a new Trade Union International. It is a fact whose gravity and importance you dare not overlook. It is also a fact that, whether you wish it or not, the Russian Revolution has cast such a glamour over the movements of the working classes, both at home and abroad, that you cannot prevent the bourgeois Governments from regarding the adherence of the workers' organisations and trade unions to the Moscow International as the most striking testimony of the solidarity of the working classes."

On the whole, this speech, which, though conciliatory in tone, was barren in fresh arguments, could not influence the position already adopted and clearly defined by the vote of the General Report.

On the other hand Mr. Merrheim's remarkably well informed and well-arranged speech produced a great impression. Mr. Merrheim had for long carried on a vigorous and careful press campaign against the pretensions of the Russian leaders to lord it over the French labour movement. His speech at Orleans was a logical sequel to this campaign.

He demonstrated the necessity of maintaining a united labour front against the whole world. The resolution of the Federal Congress of Amiens (known as the Amiens Charter) definitely separating trade union action from all political action, was not an opportunist measure adopted against any

one political party; it was the expression of the doctrine that "trade unionism, which is to-day an organisation for resistance will in the future be an organisation for production and distribution, and a basis of social re-organisation". Mr. Merrheim laid stress on the Amiens doctrine as being directly opposed to the action of the Russian leaders, especially of Lenin, who aspired to the destruction of trade union forces in order to achieve the triumph of political dictatorship, and he protested vigorously against Mr. Frossard's declarations concerning the Moscow Trade Union International.

"You have said, Comrade Frossard, that the Trade Union International, has not been definitely established, that it should be constituted at another Assembly, and that all organisations who wish to do so might belong to it. I base my reply on this position. Why destroy the Trade Union International of Amsterdam in order to reconstruct another one? Why should we not impose on the Russian Trade Unions the same conditions as are offered by the Communist International to the political bodies of various nations? The International says to them: "Come to us; these are the conditions; when you have accepted them you become our associates". Let the Russian Trade Union Organisations adhere to the Trade Union International. They will argue, and unless they obtain a majority they will have to submit. They won't accept this offer: they will continue to split up the Trade Union International and to render it powerless. The attempt to provoke secession from the Amsterdam Trade Union International is being made with malice aforethought. The documents I will bring to your notice are ample proof of this statement. I have taken them from the Bulletin of the Petrograd Office of the Communist International, which contains a summarised account of the work done by the Third General Congress of the Russian Labour Councils. You will note the language employed by the leaders of the Russian Dictatorship, and the constant affirmation of their systematic design to destroy the Amsterdam Trade Union International".

The greater part of Mr. Merrheim's speech consists of an exact and detailed account of the true tactics of the Russian Trade Union Organisations, of the tyranny of the Russian Communist Party over the Trade Unions and of all those factors the features of its campaign for the destruction of Trade Unionism.

In the course of his speech, Mr. Merrheim emphasised most strongly all that was unacceptable to French Trade Unionism in the methods of the Communist International. A passage from his speech may be quoted *in extenso* :—

"We are face to face with two theories, and consistency is required in view of the obligations entailed by both.

"The first one, our own theory of Trade Unionism, stands for open propaganda, for propaganda in the light of day. It does not hesitate to accept responsibilities when necessary,

in addition to the responsibilities involved by the plans and resolutions of our organisers.

"The second theory, the doctrine of the Third International involves the formation of certain nuclei (a theory which was discussed in the past, and which no one hesitates to discuss now), to be introduced into the heart of the Trade Unions and fostered under Party orders and control. And now, please try to understand me: These nuclei not only have to undertake a campaign of legal propaganda, but they will, here, in your own country, undertake the furtherance of illegal propaganda as well. Comrade Frossard, let us discuss this matter seriously. Does anyone dare to affirm the possibility of conducting illegal propaganda in our country when we are all aware that if there are only six in one Office, the police know what has been said in that Office? Would anyone consent to such propaganda? And yet the principle of this propaganda is one of the conditions whose acceptance secures admission to the Communist International, and it is completed by a second condition: the organisation of civil war.

"You cannot escape from the obligations entailed by these conditions, for otherwise you could not belong to the Communist International. It is because of these conditions that I said yesterday: "No hedging". Let every policy govern its own movement and accept the responsibilities which it involves. We are told to-day that adherence to the Third International is merely a matter of sentiment, and that we should associate ourselves with the Communist International in order to advertise our sympathies with the Russian Revolution. I have as much sentiment as anyone, but I also have my duties and my responsibilities as a militant with regard to the working classes. Supposing I did obey my impulse of sympathy for the Russian Revolution and join the Third International: there would still remain its doctrines and the action demanded from all its constituent organisations. If I were to join the Third International because I had convinced myself of its capacity for revolutionary action and for giving assistance to the Russian Revolution, I should agree to all the conditions entailed by my adherence. I should draw up an Agenda in this Congress, indicating the means of action advocated and imposed by the Communist International, i. e., the permanent institution of illegal propaganda in our local organisations, and the preparation for civil war in this country.

"You of the Minority have no right to leave the Congress without adopting this resolution, and thereby proving to the working classes that you have no confidence in any other methods but these.

"I do not say that I shall vote in favour of this resolution, even if you do adopt it, because I am opposed to its conditions; the question does not concern me. But I do say that you have no right to adopt this propaganda unless you publicly

accept the responsibility for the same before the working classes. With unfeigned emotion, Mr. Sirolle reminded the Chair yesterday that this propaganda had been adopted once before in connection with the Anti-Patriotic Campaign. He told you of his grief for a comrade who had been sentenced to death — a victim of the enthusiasm engendered by a meeting at Brest.

“And what of tomorrow? How many would fall as a result of this propaganda? How many innocent people would you carry away with you! How many would fail under the repressive measures provoked by your illegal and anonymous propaganda! This is what I am denouncing in anticipation. I protest against it with all the strength of my convictions as a militant.”

Mr. Merrheim closed his speech with the following words:—

“Comrades, I wish to state in conclusion: This is the situation in which we are placed:— either the attacks and libels of our Russian comrades, which apply to you, cease to-morrow, or you will continue your work of disintegration, your campaign of calumny and lies and we shall be powerless. Let us beware, for reaction would then triumph over us with the White Terror and its attendant evils.”

This speech practically closed the discussion.

At the end Mr. Jouhaux read a proposal presented by the majority. “The extraordinary Congress of Orleans, which has been called on to determine the policy of trade unionism and the future action of the General Confederation of Labour, maintains the continuity of labour activity and its allegiance to the methods and theories independently evolved by the organisation.

It recalls that the Amiens resolution, born of experience and developed in the successive Congresses of Limoges, Rennes, Paris, Montpellier and Bourges, is of an irrevocable and not of an incidental or provisional nature. As at Lyons the Congress repeats that the Amiens resolution remains the fundamental charter of French trade unionism.

It reiterates without reserve that the revolutionary aims defined by this resolution, which should be pursued with all the vigour and courage demanded by circumstances and social events, both foreseen and unforeseen, is more than ever incompatible with existing institutions, with capitalism and its political expression.

Confirming the resolution of Lyons, it emphasizes the revolutionary value of the daily victories obtained, which improve the conditions of life of the worker and partially free him from the insecurity of bondage; it declares that French trade unionism has given precedence to the control by the workers of industry and commerce. In this way, through the direct action of the workers, a part of their power is wrested from the employers, a part of their authority is wrested from the Government. This procedure will eventually

lead them to profound and absolute change by increasing their numbers and by developing their power and their means for revolutionary action.

The Congress recognises that the Economic Council of Labour constituted by the General Confederation of Labour and acting under its sole control, is a necessary institution for the continuity of this work.

Renewing the Declaration of Lyons, the Congress proclaims the urgency of nationalisation, on industrial principles, of the essential industries and means of exchange, and demands the cooperation of all trade union organisations in carrying on an intensive campaign for strengthening the General Confederation of Labour.

Recognising that this is the general wish of the workers in all countries, the Congress requests the Industrial Federation of Trade Unions, in whom the Congress has the fullest confidence, to promote common action for the immediate attainment of this social change, and points out that the present revolutionary period through which the labour world is passing is a most propitious one for similar action and discussion.

The Congress has entrusted the International Labour Office with the essential task of introducing to the colonies and smaller nations the legislation for the protection of labour, imposed by the trade union organisations in countries with a greater industrial development and to devote itself to the vital problem of the equitable distribution of raw materials. For this purpose only and in consideration of the fact that the International Labour Office is mainly an intelligence office, the General Confederation of Labour is represented in this institution, where it is determined to claim respect for the fundamental principles of international trade unionism. In case of any deviations from the above aims, or in the absence of the necessary initiative, the General Confederation of Labour would have to reconsider the question of the continuance of its representation, which up to the present has been granted with that independence and dignity of trade unionism which the organised workers are entitled to expect.

The Congress expresses its absolute sympathy with the workers of other nations.

The Congress wishes to express its warm sympathy with the Italian wage-earners to whom it offers all encouragement for their noble example of energy and will power.

The Congress puts on record again its indignation with regard to the servile instrument of universal reaction, the French Government, and it affirms its complete solidarity with revolutionary Russia.

The Congress demands that the General Confederation of Labour should organise, in agreement with the Trade Union International, a ceaseless campaign for a lasting peace, until such time as the Soviet Republic should gain its independence and a free Russia at last be governed as she thinks fit.

The Congress is convinced that the union of the proletariat, the defeat of universal reaction and the total emancipation of the wage earners, irrespective of their doctrines, creeds, race and nationality, can only be accomplished by their complete independence, by mutual respect for their individual principles, in accordance with their organisations, for their traditions, their ideas and their particular spirit.

The congress invites all the trade union organisations to act energetically for a complete and general amnesty, and to strive more especially for the abrogation of the repressive laws directed against every expression of free thought, and for the recognition of trade union laws for all.

For these reasons the Congress proclaims that the constitutive basis of the General Confederation of Labour, the principles of self government, which it has proclaimed up to to-day its methods of action and realisation, are in absolute agreement with the present exigencies of the struggle. The General Confederation of Labour proclaims once again, in the face of the whole world, its ideal of economic freedom attainable by the suppression of wage-slavery. "

A motion by the minority had been previously read in the Congress (vide appendix) as well as a motion presented by M. Verdier. The result of the voting was as follows :

Motion of the Majority	1479 votes
Motion of the Minority	602 "
Motion Verdier	44 "
Abstentions	83 "

Thus the extraordinary Congress of Orleans reached a conclusion similar to the result of the ordinary Congress of Lyons. At Amiens, as at Orleans, there had been a discussion respecting the direction to be given to trade union policy. Against those who attempted to involve French trade unionism in negative position of systematic opposition to every question and on every ground, to those who considered that the effort of French trade unionism should above all things manifest itself in favour of the Russian revolution, which they regarded in the light of a symbol, the Lyons Congress had opposed a thesis defined by Messrs. Jouhaux and Merrheim, a thesis of constructive trade unionism which demands a more ample participation of the workers trade unions in the government of the nation and a more careful control of production. The separatist campaign of the Minority had continued after the Congress of Lyons, and had after many and often painful episodes, succeeded in obtaining a hearing from the Congress of the General Confederation of Labour. The Congress had opened in an atmosphere of violent and personal controversy. But to begin with, the Minority opposition found no speakers in the Congress to give a precise and vigorous exposition of their theses, whilst, on the other hand, the accusations

formulated prior to the Congress were practically never discussed at all.

But there is a numerical difference between the votes for the movement at the Lyons Congress and those of the Congress of Orleans. At Lyons, the motion of the Confederal Congress had been adopted by 1,633 votes against 324, with 43 abstentions. At Orleans the votes of the opposition are far more numerous, and it is even possible that the corrected figure was slightly higher than the figure announced in the Assembly. It should, however, be remembered that many trade unions of the Minority had issued peremptory injunctions which must have prevented a certain number of the delegates from voting with the Majority.

It is possible that the Executive Committee (Commission Administrative) and the Confederal Office (Bureau Confédéral) can really count on a larger majority than the one obtained at the Orleans Congress. The debates at the National Committee of the 8th and 9th November are of a nature to confirm this impression.

MODIFICATION OF CONSTITUTION.

We have already stated that this question could not be broached by the Congress, but had been considered by a Commission specially appointed by the Congress. The Congress at first had to content itself by voting for an increase of Confederal contributions in order to meet the expenses of the propaganda. A more detailed study of the modification of the Constitution was postponed until the National Confederal Council of the 8th November. The latter Council adopted the increase in the price of the stamps. It likewise consented to raise the price of the Confederal Card to 1 fr. This increase in the sums received is to serve, inter alia, for the publication of a daily Confederal Journal.

The Confederal leaders consider that if the workers' movement is able to obtain exclusive control of a journal, it will secure a precious weapon for the furtherance of its action.

STUDIES AND REPORTS

already issued.

Where the English or French text of a Report has not yet been published it will be issued at a later date.

Series A.

- N° 1. THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SPANISH WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS, issued on September 25th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 2. THE DISPUTE IN THE METAL INDUSTRY IN ITALY. TRADE UNION CONTROL OF INDUSTRY, (First part) issued on September 25th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 3. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRADES UNION CONGRESS 1920, issued on October 4th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 4. INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF WORKERS IN THE FOOD AND DRINK TRADES, issued on October 11th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 5. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE MINERS' FEDERATION OF GREAT BRITAIN. CONFERENCE BETWEEN SIR ROBERT HORNE AND THE MINERS' FEDERATION, issued on October 11th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 6. THE CONGRESS OF THE LABOUR AND SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, issued on October 14th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 7. THE MINERS' INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS, issued on October 19th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 8. THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION. A COMPARISON, issued on October 21st 1920. *English and French.*
- " 9. THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF METAL WORKERS, issued on October 22nd 1920. *English and French.*
- " 10. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE MINERS' FEDERATION OF GREAT BRITAIN. CONFERENCE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TRIPLE INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE, issued on October 26th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 11. THE DISPUTE IN THE METAL INDUSTRY IN ITALY. TRADE UNION CONTROL OF INDUSTRY. (Second part) issued on November 4th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 12. THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF BOOKBINDERS, issued on November 26th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 13. THE MINERS' STRIKE IN GREAT BRITAIN, issued on December 21th 1920, *English and French.*

Series B.

- N° 1. COAL PRODUCTION IN THE RUHR DISTRICT. Enquiry by the International Labour Office, end of May 1920, issued on September 1st 1920. *English and French.*
- " 2. PAPERS RELATING TO SCHEMES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF RAW MATERIALS AND FOOD STUFFS, issued on October 5th 1920. *English and French.*
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- " 2. GOVERNMENT ACTION IN DEALING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT IN ITALY, issued on October 27th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 3. THE BULGARIAN LAW ON COMPULSORY LABOUR, issued on November 4th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 4. THE ACTION OF THE SWISS GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT, issued on November 13th 1920. *English and French.*

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- N° 1. STAFF REGULATIONS ON THE FRENCH RAILWAYS, issued on September 4th 1920. *English and French.*

Series H.

- N° 1. CONSUMERS' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN 1919 (Denmark and Sweden), issued on September 8th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 2. SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE BELGIAN CO-OPERATIVE OFFICE, issued on September 25th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 3. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF FRENCH CONSUMERS' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES, issued on November 24th 1920. *English and French.*

Series K.

- N° 1. FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF LANDWORKERS' UNIONS AFFILIATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNION, issued on November, 1920. *English and French.*
- " 2. AGRARIAN CONDITIONS IN SPAIN, issued on November 10th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 3. SMALL HOLDINGS IN SCOTLAND, issued on November 12th 1920. *English and French.*
- " 4. THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY IN ITALIAN AGRICULTURE, issued on December 17th 1920. *English and French.*